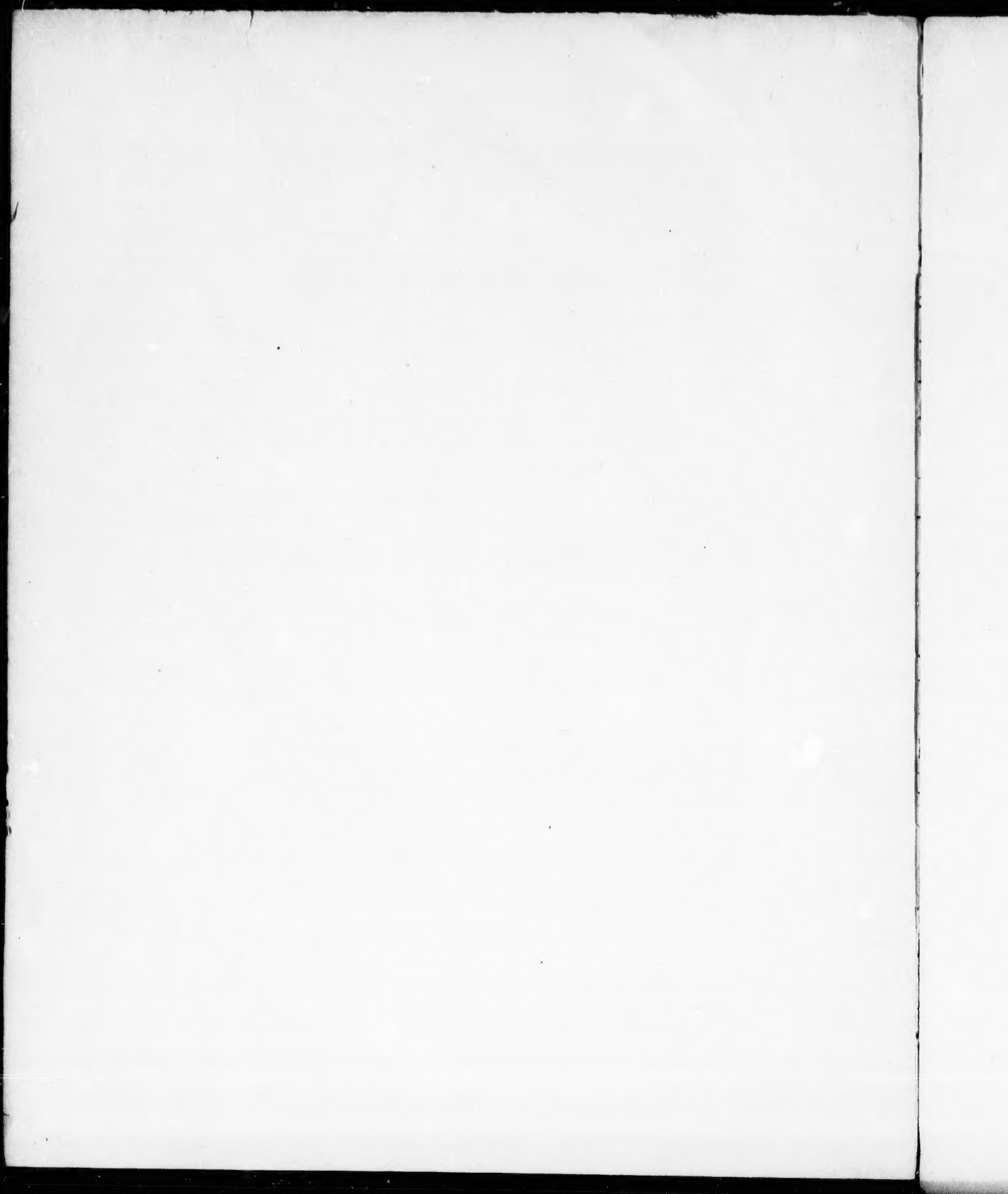

INAUGURATION PASTORAL LETTER
OF
HIS LORDSHIP ANTOINE RACINE
FIRST BISHOP OF SHERBROOKE
20th OCTOBER 1874.



INAUGURATION PASTORAL LETTER
OF
HIS LORDSHIP ANTOINE RACINE

FIRST BISHOP OF SHERBROOKE.

ANTOINE RACINE,

By the mercy of God and the favor of the Holy Apostolic See,
First Bishop of Sherbrooke.

*To the Clergy, to the religious communities and to all the faithful of
the Diocese of Sherbrooke, Greeting and Benediction in Our
Lord.*

Speaking through Our Holy Father the Pope, Our Lord
Jesus-Christ has made known to us His supreme and divine will, and
has commanded us to come to you, Our Dearly Beloved Brethren.

By a Bull dated from Rome, the twenty eighth August, of the
present year, the Vicar of Jesus-Christ has erected into a distinct
diocese, under the name of the Diocese of Sherbrooke :

1st. That part of the Diocese of St. Hyacinth included in the
townships of Stukely, Ely, Melbourne, Brompton, Oxford, Ascot,
Eaton, Clifton, Compton, Hatly, Magog, Bolton, Sutton, Potton,
Stanstead, Barreston, Barford, Hereford, excepting the following parts
of the townships which shall remain attached to the Diocese of S.
Hyacinth, to wit: 1st. the part of the township of Ely, included in the
parish of St. John the Baptist of Roxton; 2nd. The part of the
township of Stukely, included in the parish of St. Bernandine of
Waterloo; 3rd. In fine, the part of the township of Bolton, included
in the parish of St. Edward;

2nd. That part of the Diocese of Three Rivers including the townships of Shipton, Cleveland, Windsor, Stoke, Wotton, Ham, Dudswell, Weedon, Garthly, Stratford, Wesbury, Newport, Auckland, Bury, Tingwick, Winslow, Whitton, Emberton, Marston, Hampden, Ditton, Chesham, Clinton and Woburn ;

3rd. That part of the Diocese of Quebec including 1st. The township of Wolfestown, excepting the part belonging to the Parish of St. Ferdinand of Halifax ; 2nd. The townships of Spalding and Ditchfield ; 3rd. That part of the township of Ireland which belongs to the Parish of St. Julian of Wolfestown.

By another Bull dated from Rome, the first September last, our Holy Father the Pope, notwithstanding our unworthiness, has appointed us first Bishop of this Diocese.

And now, at this solemn moment, when we begin the sublime and dread mission in behalf of your souls, redeemed by the blood of Jesus-Christ, which the Divine Pastor has confided to us, what words shall we speak to you ?

The loving words of the Apostle St. Paul to the Philippians :

" Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus-Christ. Gratia vobis, et pax a Deo Patri nostro, et Domino Jesu Christo.

I give thanks to my God, continues the same Apostle, in every remembrance of you. Always, in all my prayers, making supplication for you all, with joy ; for your communication in the gospel of Christ from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing, that He, who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.

As it is meet for me to think this for you all : for that I have you in my heart.

And this I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding : filled with the fruit of justice,

through Jesus-Christ, unto the glory of and praise of God (Philippians I.)

Called to the episcopate, and being unable to exonerate ourselves from the heavy burden imposed upon us, should we not tremble at the sight of our weakness and unworthiness. It seems to us that we felt the whole weight of this dignity, which fills our soul with awe, when, before God's altar, we answered the questions of the consecrating Bishop, ere he conferred upon us the plenitude of the Priesthood of Jesus-Christ.

These, O. D. B. B., are the questions which were put to us, they contain all our duties; and better than any words of ours, will they make you understand how much reason we have to tremble, and to ask the assistance of your prayers.

"Will you adapt, submit, your intelligence, your reason, to the maxims of the Sacred Scriptures, to the teachings of the Divine Word? Judge of the faith, and interpreter of Holy Writ, will you identify your mind with the deposit of Revelation, no longer hold to your private opinion, but contract with the Sacred Writings a new relation, an eternal alliance, to expound to the faithful all you shall have understood in these holy books?" We answered: "We will".

"Will you submit to Catholic Tradition, to the decrees of the Holy See, to the authority of Peter and his successors? Legislator of the people, will you govern them, not according to your ideas, but according to the laws? Will you become familiar with the teaching, the legislation of all christian ages? Will you show fidelity, submission, and obedience in all things to the Vicar of Jesus-Christ?" We answered: "We will".

"Preacher of christian morality, will you renounce the passions which enslave the world? Will you renounce the concupiscence of the flesh, observe chastity, purity, sobriety, and propagate these admirable virtues? Will you renounce the concupiscence of the eyes, despise the perishable concerns of this world, and know no other traffic than of things divine, and the salvation of souls? Will

"you renounce the pride of life, practise humility, fly honors, and teach others this spirit of renouncement?" We answered: "We will".

"Finally, you who are about to become Father and Pastor, you to whom will apply the poor, strangers, orphans, and the needy, will you, for God's sake, be to them affable and merciful? *Vis pauperibus et peregrinis omnibusque indigentibus esse propter nomen Domini affabilis et misericors?* Will you be to them affable and merciful, that is to say, when your hands are empty will you give them, at least, the alms of a kind and compassionate word; and when they shall be filled, the alms of a benefit, of an assistance, given with love." We answered: "We will".

Such is, O. D. B. B., a summary of the duties imposed on your Bishop; obedience will not allow us to exempt ourselves therefrom.

The Holy Ghost expresses them in this text of the acts of the Apostles:

Take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you Bishops, to rule the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. (XX. 28.)

When, before God, we meditate these words, in fear we cannot but repeat the words which Moses spoke to God on Mount Horeb, when about to begin the mission confided to him. "*Who am I? O Lord! that I should go, and should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? — Quis sum ego ut vadam..... et educam filios Israel?*" (Exod. III. 2.)

You are aware, O. D. B. B., that the episcopal dignity is no favor, it is a heavy burden, it is a ministry terrible to the angels themselves, the dangers and responsibilities of which we understand, to day, better than ever.

The love we bear you, the charity you owe us, the interest of your souls, all obliges you, O. D. B. B., to call down upon us light and strength from on high; it is but just that you should aid us, by your fervent prayers, in the fulfilment of our duties.

Our inexperience calls for particular assistance, amid the difficulties which the organization of a new diocese necessarily entails.

And you, our beloved Fellow-laborers in the guidance of souls, you, whose ministry is so onerous, who maintain the works of Faith and of Charity; you, whose enlightened zeal and ardent faith have formed the consolation and joy of your venerable Pastors, pray for your Bishop. We desire to be a Father in your midst, gladly we shall open to you our heart, receive the secrets of your soul, participate in your joys, and share your sorrows.

And you, the beloved spouses of Jesus-Christ, the ornament and honor of our Diocese, pray for us. Avert, by your prayers, the anger of God; be ever angels of peace, preparing for your bishop the way to souls. Better to fulfil this great mission, confided to you by the Church, be ever faithful to your holy vocation, strangers to the world, forgetful of self, and living in union and charity.

And you all, faithful of the Diocese of Sherbrooke, you whom we are happy to call our brethren and well-beloved sons, "*Our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged.*" — *Os nostrum patet ad vos, cor nostrum dilatatum est.* (II Cor. 6. 11.)

Pray that God may strengthen us to bear so weighty a burden, but which, by your respect and docility, will be rendered light and easy.

We understand, O. D. B. B., how justly you regret to be separated from dioceses so well organized as the Arch-diocese of Quebec, and the dioceses of St. Hyacinth and Three-Rivers, and to see torn asunder the sweet ties which united you to the venerable and illustrious Pastors, who have hitherto governed, and directed, you in the way of salvation.

But the Supreme Head of the Church, at the request of the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Quebec, has judged it advantageous that you should have in your midst, and in this fine part of our country, so favored by the richness of the soil and the salubrity of the climate, a Bishop, to dispense the treasures of grace, which the

Prince of Pastors has placed in his hands, more easily visit the distant parishes of the territory under his jurisdiction, and better ascertain their material, moral, and religious condition.

For the Bishop, as his name indicates, is placed in the Church of Jesus-Christ as an ever watchful eye, to inquire into the spiritual necessities of the faithful, and bestow upon them his care.

You see, O. D. B. B., that the immortal Pius IX, although overwhelmed with tribulations, omits nothing which can contribute to your spiritual welfare. Manifest your gratitude by praying for him with redoubled fervor.

The wise rules of discipline, in vigor in the Arch-diocese of Quebec, and the dioceses of St. Hyacinth and Three-Rivers, shall continue to be obligatory in the parishes, which formed a part of these respective dioceses, until a more thorough knowledge of the new Diocese of Sherbrooke shall permit us to establish a uniform rule, based on the wise rules which maintain the Ecclesiastical discipline of this Province.

To-day, we are happy to render the solemn homage of our respect and gratitude to the venerable Bishops who have governed, with so much wisdom and solicitude, the flock committed to our care. You, O. D. B. B., "*Remember your Prelates who have spoken the word of God to you.*" (Hebs. XIII. 7.) The zeal they have shown for your spiritual welfare, the interest they will ever bear to you, undoubtedly render this obligation most agreeable to your grateful hearts.

Wherefore, having invoked the Holy Name of God, we have ruled and ordained, rule and ordain, as follows:

1st. We publish and promulgate by the present, the Brief of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX., dated the twenty eighth August, of this year, erecting the new Diocese of Sherbrooke;

2nd. The Feast of the Dedication of St. Michael, Archangel, titular of our Cathedral, shall be celebrated, each year, throughout

the diocese, on the twenty ninth day of September, under the rite of first class, with an Octave, according to the rubrics ;

3rd. We permit, until the first of next February, the priests of our diocese, to exercise all the extraordinary powers and faculties given to them by the respective ordinary. Those who, during the interval, believe that the continuation thereof may be profitable to souls, will show us the documents. With regard to the same powers, given verbally, they will cease on the first day of November next ;

4th. We renew and confirm, as far as required, all the ordinances, statutes, rules of discipline, prohibitions, and reserved cases, in vigor, at present, in the territory under our jurisdiction ;

5th. We ordain that the prayer for the Pope be said at all the masses, when the rubric permits, and that the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, with the versicle and prayer which follows the anthem of the Blessed Virgin, at the end of Complin, according to the season, be recited for the Sovereign Pontiff, after each mass ;

6th. Until the first Sunday of Advent, inclusively, on all Sundays and Holydays of obligation, three *Paters* and *Aves*, with the invocation : Sancte Michaël, Archangele, ora pro nobis, once, will be said according to our intention, to implore God's blessing on our episcopate, and render it fruitful.

O Immaculate Virgin ! under thy auspices we enter on possession of our Church. Take us, O good Mother, under thy protection, and lead by the hand him, who, from his infancy, has tenderly loved thee.

O sweet Mother of the Saviour, and our Mother ! deign to accept the offering of our hearts. Listen to the prayers of the Pastor, the Clergy and the Faithful.

Thou art the Mother of Holy Hope, remember thy former mercies to thy children, and thy devotedness to the Holy Church. Let thy ever-blessed name be our help and our consolation, during our episcopate.

Glorious Prince of the heavenly host ! St. Michael, Archangel, for the Church it was thou didst first arm thyself against Satan and his angels ! To thy kind protection we commend, to day, the diocese confided to our care.

We beseech thee, by the glory thou enjoyest in heaven, and the power God has given thee, grant us thy assistance, now, and ever. Be our Patron, our Advocate, our Protector. Maintain the faithful in the true Faith ; from the attacks of the devil defend them during life, and particularly at the hour of death.

Shall this our present Pastoral Letter be read in our Cathedral, to-day, and at the prone of all parochial churches or chapels, and others where public service is performed, and, in Chapter, in all religious communities, on the first Sunday after its reception.

Given at Sherbrooke under our signature, the seal of the Diocese, and the counter-signature of our secretary, on this the twentieth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four.



✠ ANTOINE, BISHOP OF SHERBROOKE.

By His Lordship's command,

F. P. DIGNAN, Pst.

Secretary.